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LETTER

OF THE

HON. LOUIS M'LANE,

(LATE SECRETARY OF STATE,)

ON THE

SUBJECT OF ANTI-MASONRY;

ADDRESSED TO THE

ANTI-MASONIC COMMITTEE,

AT HARRISBURGH.

IT IS RE-PUBLISHED FOR THE INFORMATION
AND BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC.

PITTSBURGH:

MAY—1836.

TO THE PEOPLE OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY.

FELLOW-CITIZENS:

THE letter of the Hon. LOUIS M'LANE, on the subject of Anti-Masonry, is considered worthy of the special attention of every man friendly to the republican institutions of the country; and who possesses just sentiments and liberal principles. It is rendered more important, and is entitled to greater respect and consideration, in consequence of the fact, that Mr. M'Lane has retired to private life—he is not resident in this State—and stands uninfluenced and unaffected by any changes or convulsions in the politics of Pennsylvania. The letter of this patriotic and distinguished citizen of our republic, is respectfully submitted to your very serious consideration and candid judgment.

PITTSBURGH, May, 1836.

Letter of the Hon. Louis M'Lane.

THE following correspondence is worthy of special attention. Hearing of the existence of Mr. M'Lane's LETTER, we addressed a note to him on the subject, asking permission at the same time to make it public. The subjoined notes will, however, fully explain the state of the affair.

OFFICE OF THE U. S. GAZETTE, }
Philadelphia, Feb. 12, 1836. }

HON. LOUIS M'LANE:

Sir—Previous to the assembling of the late anti-masonic convention at Harrisburg, a committee of anti-masons addressed a letter to you, and several other distinguished citizens, desiring an expression of your sentiments on the subject of FREE-MASONRY, and on the propriety of excluding Free-Masons from all public trusts. Since that time, the anti-masons have published answers from two citizens only; but it is understood that nearly every gentleman addressed, responded to the interrogatories. My connection with the recent proceedings of our State Legislature, and my station as the first officer of the Grand Chapter of this State, induce in me a solicitude to know the sentiments of yourself, and the other gentlemen who were addressed, on the questions submitted to you.

I have applied by letter, similar to this, to Mr. Calhoun and Mr. Forsyth for their answers, and should be happy to be furnished with your's, if you answered, with permission to lay it before the public.—I am, with great respect, your ob't servant,

JOSEPH R. CHANDLER.

NEW YORK, March 7, 1836.

Sir—At the time your letter of the 12th ult. reached New York, I was absent from the city; and in consequence of my prolonged engagements, have been unable earlier to attend to your application.

It is true, that previous to the assembling of the late anti-masonic convention at Harrisburg, a committee of anti-masons addressed a letter to me, desiring an expression of my sentiments in regard to certain questions proposed in the letter, for the purpose of being submitted to the convention; and that I annexed the letter in explanation of my views of the subject.

Understanding the application to be of a public nature, and that my answer was required for public use, I am not aware of

any confidence or delicacy which forbids a compliance with your request. I therefore send you a copy of the answer I furnished; and if you deem it of sufficient importance, you have my permission to publish it.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your ob't servant.

LOUIS McLANE.

To Mr. Joseph R. Chandler.

HARRISBURG, Nov. 16, 1835.

HON. LOUIS McLANE:

Dear Sir—The democratic anti-masonic party in Pennsylvania, wishing to ascertain the opinions of the prominent men of the nation on the subject of Free-Masonry, (which, since the disclosure of its oaths and obligations, is in Pennsylvania deemed a subject of great importance,) we, in behalf of the state committee of that party, take the liberty of addressing to you the following questions, and would respectfully solicit a reply.

1. Do you believe Free-Masonry, and all other secret societies, bound by secret oaths, to be a moral and political evil?

2. Do you believe the exercise of the elective franchise to be a fair, constitutional, & expedient means of removing such evil?

3. When the Chief Magistrate of a State or of the Union is elected on anti-masonic principles, do you believe it to be his duty to sustain those principles in his appointments to office?

A Democratic Anti-Masonic State Convention will be held on the 14th Dec. next at this place: an answer before that time is therefore respectfully requested, if convenient.

We have the honor to remain your's, &c.

J. WALLACE,	} <i>In behalf of the Committee of the Democratic Anti-Masonic Party of Pennsylvania.</i>
SAMUEL SHOCH,	
GEO. W. HARRIS,	

A copy of this letter has been sent to Messrs. Webster, Calhoun, Tazewell, Forsyth, and other distinguished gentlemen.

NEW YORK, Dec. 11, 1835.

Gentlemen—

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th of November, requesting my opinion upon certain questions which as a Committee of the Democratic, Anti-Masonic Party of Pennsylvania, you propose. I cannot be insensible to the honor done me by so respectable a body of my fellow-citizens, in thinking my opinions worthy of their inquiry, more especially when I read the names of the deservedly distinguished individuals who are made the objects of a similar application.

I am not prone, I trust, lightly to form opinions upon questions of public importance, nor to shrink from the avowal of them, when called upon by public expediency; still I am obliged to confess, your letter had in some degree embarrassed me, occupying as I do, the station of a private citizen and neither seeking nor desiring public honors, I can scarcely hope that even your indulgence will pardon me, for venturing upon a public discussion of the delicate topics involved in your inquiries. I am far from undervaluing the favor of the people, or considering official station unworthy of the highest ambition, if attainable by honorable means; but with the principles to which I have always held, and to which, with my notions of the public welfare, I must continue to adhere, it has seemed to me that I should better consult my own proper pride, and happiness, and more advantageously discharge my duties to my fellow-citizens, in the retirement which I have voluntarily chosen. Though I may feel some regret at the too frequent triumph of party dexterity and subserviency over the higher claims of national patriotism, yet I will yield to none in an ardent love, of our constitutional liberty, & our free institutions, or a profound and holy interest in the public weal. If these objects could in any manner be promoted by the frank exposition of my opinions, upon the subject of your letter, I should less regret the opposition, in which I cannot but apprehend it must place me, to the sentiments entertained by the respectable party, which you represent. Nevertheless, I am not satisfied that I should be excusable for wholly neglecting your letter, and if in the explanation I proceed to make of my opinions, you see nothing to change your own, it will entitle me I hope to the merit of duly appreciating your call, and of not concealing my sentiments upon a subject which may hereafter exert a powerful influence upon the liberties and happiness of the country. Your letter requests my answer to the three following questions.

1. "Do you believe Free-Masonry, and all other Secret Societies, bound by secret Oaths, to be a moral and political evil?"
2. "Do you believe the exercise of the elective franchise, to be a fair, constitutional, and expedient means of removing such evil?"
3. "When the Chief Magistrate of a State, or of the Union is elected, on Anti-Masonic principles, do you believe it to be his duty, to sustain those principles, in his appointments to office?"

It does not appear to me, that there is necessarily any moral, and political evil in Secret Societies, provided the objects of those Societies, be meritorious in their nature and beneficial in their tendency. Secrecy in itself does not constitute a crime, and is often an important element, in associations of every kind, Religious, Social, Moral and Political, eminently conducing to their prudent management and promoting their valuable ends. In such case, the Oaths by which these Societies are bound, and which may be considered important, to secure such secrecy, and effect such ends, provided the obligations they impose, and the means they inculcate, be lawful and honorable, appear to me, equally free, from any criminality. It may not always be wise to practice secrecy; an air of mystery, often draws suspicion, upon the most innocent associations, gives a sinister aspect to their most harmless and even praiseworthy transactions, and impedes their efforts to do good. It should be avoided as much as possible in political institutions, especially under our system of Government, where the People, for whose benefit they are intended, have a right to require as much publicity as may be consistent with the public weal. But in all cases, where a Society chooses to throw a veil of secrecy over some part of its internal

mechanism, we ought not for that reason to pronounce it evil, and immoral in its nature, and dangerous to the community, but ought rather to judge it by what is known of its acknowledged objects and the result of its labors. I refrain however from pursuing these general observations further, taking it for granted that the main object of this enquiry relates to the Society of Free-Masons, to which I will therefore confine my answers; which in fact will embrace, and with more regard to order, all that I may find it necessary to say, on the whole subject. On this point I explicitly declare, that I do not believe Free-Masonry, though bound by Secret Oaths, a moral and political evil, and here, as the general course of my remarks, may receive some coloring from the confession, it is due to candour to avow, that I am a Free-Mason, having many years since taken several degrees of the order of, as it is called, "Ancient York Masons." In this I was influenced by the wishes of many of my most esteemed personal friends, men whom I knew to be pure in their morals, and honorable in all their relations. Before entering the Society, I understood that according to its rules and principles, the pre-requisites to admission, were, an unblemished character, and virtuous life; and although, I could not but be aware, that this high standard of membership was not always rigidly exacted, yet it had its weight in giving dignity to the Institution, in my eyes. I certainly neither perceived, nor could apprehend any impropriety in uniting myself with a Society to which the most eminent individuals, in all countries, had belonged, in which the best and most distinguished of my own State, occupied the highest places, and to which, above all, *the Father of his Country*, throughout his long life, had given the sanction of his illustrious name. All these considerations, which had so convincing an effect on my own mind, ought certainly to have some weight in any inquiry into the moral and political character of the Institution. I can confidently affirm, also, that as far as I have penetrated the "mysteries, of the order" I have never, that I can remember, received any injunction, nor incurred any obligation, incompatible with my duties, as a man, a patriot or a christian; certain I am that had any such been proposed, I should have felt it my imperative duty to reject it, and promptly to retire, without counting the hazard. It is proper to add, that perceiving nothing inculcated by the Society, which was not of general obligation, nor any thing of sufficient importance, to excite particular interest, I very soon withdrew, and have not since attended a Lodge, or taken any part in the order. It is not my purpose in the preceding observations to recommend Free-Masonry, as worthy of any special favor, or encouragement; or to excite its members to any exertion for its maintenance. Unless it should possess greater means of good than I am aware of, I consider it a superannuated Institution, valuable in its younger days and in darker ages, but which has nearly outlived its usefulness and may be left to the certain decay, and final disappearance, which must be its fate, before the progress of knowledge and the lights of civilization. Nevertheless believing it at be at least harmless in its nature, I am unwilling, silently to look on, and see it made an engine of mischief, by the prejudices or misconception of those opposed to it. I therefore feel prompted as far as I am able, to screen its members from unmerited odium; and to prevent the public from being led into the infliction of so much injury and injustice as would attend an indiscriminate and unsparing proscription of all those who might have belonged to a Lodge of Free Masons. As it regards myself too, I feel called upon by every sentiment of proper pride, to vindicate myself from the supposi-

tion of having enrolled myself at a mature age, with a body of men, so morally and politically base, as to forfeit the esteem of their countrymen; that I should have leagued with them in a dark and dangerous association, noxious to the safety of the State, and that I should have continued openly or secretly linked with them, until the dread of popular excitement, or the suggestion of personal ambition, should effect, what honor and conscience could not, and render me a tardy recreant to a dishonest cause, and a penitential candidate for the fruits of forgiveness. It appears to me therefore to be due, no less to a correct elucidation of the subject of your enquiry, than to my personal relation with it, that I should give a brief view of what I understand to be the history, principles, obligations, and objects of Free-Masonry; and here I would observe, that there is much less of secrecy and mystery about this Institution, than is claimed by some of its friends, and suspected by more of its enemies. Both its foundation and cardinal objects, are matters not only of constitutional regulation, but of grave and public history, which, so far from being so recondite as to elude the diligent enquirer, lies perfectly open to the general reader. Even its supposed mysteries, secret signs and occult rites, I have always regarded as accidental, and unimportant.

The origin of Free-Masons is carried back unto the earliest ages, and ascribed to associations of artificers, having for object by their combined means and efforts, to erect vast edifices, both civil and religious, which were objects of national glory and advantage.—To these are ascribed some of the noblest monuments of art in Asia Minor; similar associations existed among the Romans, and were incorporated under the name of *Collegia* and *Corpora*. They held their meetings with closed doors, but were deemed of such national benefit, as to be particularly favored by the later governments of Rome. In after time we still find them existing, as travelling associations of Greek, Italian, French, German and Flemish Artists, united under one or more leaders. They went about building churches, convents and cathedrals, and encamping in huts, in the neighborhood of their work. They called themselves Free-Masons and were protected by charters, of the clerical and secular powers. In this way by the co-operation of so many hands, and such varied talent, they were enabled to accomplish those magnificent and stupendous piles of Gothic Architecture, in various countries of Europe, which remain monuments of human skill, and objects of wonder to modern artists. Shifting their abode, from country to country, in dark and barbarous times, exposed to the dangers and vicissitudes of civil wars and feudal oppression, they lived as much as possible within themselves. Secrecy was the characteristic of all the corporations of the middle ages, and in those times of rudeness and superstition when the nicer sense of moral obligation, and promissory faith, which belongs to our more civilized and enlightened age was unknown, it was thought necessary to bind the initiated to secrecy by awful ceremonies, and appalling oaths. Even down to the most recent times, the corporations of Mechanics, on the Continent of Europe, had, what they called the “Secrets of the Craft,” being driven to mystery and concealment by Papal vigilance, wrapping up their knowledge in forms otherwise foreign to it; binding themselves by certain vows and ceremonies, and instituting mystic signs of recognition known only to the initiated.

The architects, with their assistants and pupils, formed associations called lodges. In 1459 a grand lodge was instituted at Strasburg, of

which the architect of the cathedral was grand master. The society was composed of masters, companions and apprentices, and had a secret word, with signs of recognition. Maximilian I, subsequently granted them certain privileges by charter. "Their rules inculcated submission to the masters of their lodges, charity to the poorer brethren, purity of life, and attention to their religious duties." Among their symbols are the square, the plumb, rule and the compass. In England the free-masons were united under written constitutions, founded upon the ancient constitution of the Roman and Greek colleges and the provisions of the civil laws. "The different tenets of the members, the scientific occupation and elevated views of their leading architects and clergymen, gave rise to a more liberal spirit of toleration, a purer view of religion, and a stricter system of morals than were common in those times of civil feud and religious persecution." As early as the year 926, King Athelstane confirmed at York the constitution to all the corporations of architects. The original of this constitution, written in Anglo Saxon, is still preserved at York. This instrument recites the previous events connected with the rise of the societies of architects, the devastation and destruction of the edifices by the northern tribes, and the resolution of Athelstane to restore the venerable society; and it contains the sixteen most ancient laws found in the corpus juris, relating to the college of architects. "It is certain that in England and Scotland, lodges laboring according to this constitution existed in uninterrupted series, and often admitted as members learned and influential men who were not architects. Even kings were thus occasionally enrolled. These were called accepted members." In the year 1717, the institutions of free-masons so decreased under the progress of society, and with the changes of the times, that there were but four lodges in England in which the old symbols and customs were preserved. In that year an essential and public change was made by some of the members of the four lodges, in the whole purport of the society. From being really an association of architects, they changed it into one which had nothing to do with building, but of which "brotherly love, relief and truth" were to be the essential characteristics. At the time of this change, Sir Christopher Wren, one of the most famous of modern architects, was the grand master of the ancient fraternity. "In 1721 the old constitutions were so remodeled as to form a general book of constitutions, which alone should be valid for all the special lodges in future to be established under the authority of this grand lodge." Of this general constitution, that of York as granted by Athelstane was the basis. In 1721 it was, with some changes, accepted, and in 1723 was acknowledged and printed. Of this general constitution, several editions have been printed, in all of which, and particularly in the latest, the traits of the ancient York instrument are recognized. "Of the duties of the masons, as inculcated by this instrument, in its various editions, the following are the most important. *"The mason is bound to obey the laws of morality, and if he understands the principles of the society, he will neither be an atheist nor a profligate. Though the masons of ancient times were obliged to profess the religion of their country, whatever that might be, it is considered now more beneficial to bind them to that religion alone in which all men agree, and to leave to each his peculiar opinions. They are to be men of probity and honor, whatever may be their difference in name, or in opinion. By this, says the constitution, masonry becomes the central point of union and the means of establishing friendship among persons*

who, without it, would live in continual separation. The mason is to be a peaceable subject or citizen, and never to allow himself to be involved in riots or conspiracies against the public peace and the welfare of the nation. No private hatred or feud shall be carried to the threshold of the lodge, still less political or religious disputes, as the masons in this capacity are only of the above named general religion." Thus, gentlemen, according to my understanding of it, and of the estimate I had formed before associating with the fraternity, I have delineated the rise, origin, progress, principles and objects of free-masonry, according to the notions of ancient York masons; to this delineation I will add that the first lodge of free-masons was held in Boston in the year 1733, and their first public procession in the same city was in the year 1739. The first, while the original York constitution was in unaltered force, and the last was one year after the last new edition of that famous instrument was printed. I am not aware that previous to this period there was a lodge in any part of the United States and it is not therefore unreasonable to assume this as the basis of free masonry in this country. It is therefore observable that even the ancient corporations of architects, from the foundation of what in contradistinction to them may be called speculative masonry, are not involved in any great obscurity, but that the order of Ancient York Masons is clearly and distinctly marked. Its origin dates not so far back as the settlement of our own country, and takes its rise in a public avowed change of previous chartered societies, made by authorized lodges as late as the year 1717, a period of advanced civilization in which arts and science had made considerable progress, long after the spirit of freedom had broke from the fetters with which it had been bound, and when it might be supposed to be jealous of secret institutions. Nearly fifty years after the principles of liberal government had been greatly developed and in a high degree acknowledged and established by the revolution in England of 1688, and less than sixty years before the same principles were fully established by our own glorious revolution. The change thus made entered into and formed a part of the grave history of the times; those who made it attempted no concealment, and not only declared and established the principles, objects and duties of the new order, but secured them by written constitution, which they printed and published to the world. It would be difficult to assign a more satisfactory reason for this proceeding than the desire to persevere in the form of a written character, the fundamental objects and laws, as a guide for future time, and to which the secret proceedings of the lodges should be in strict subordination. If there be any other authority, under which their proceedings are conducted at the present day, it is unknown to me. According to these documents, it would be impossible to affirm that free-masonry is a moral and political evil, though it certainly may not be exempt from the abuses to which, in common with all other institutions it is liable. By the express terms of its constitution, it inculcates the purest and most elevated morality; by the same charter it is forever separated from political objects; and while it secures to its members the utmost freedom of opinion upon political subjects, it discourages angry feuds, and erects the lodge as a common altar, at which all eternal dissensions are forgotten and the members meet in harmony and concord.—According to these documents it would appear that whatever of secrecy there may be in free-masonry must consist rather in its rites and ceremonies, & in the oaths of the lodge, than in the gener-

objects of the institution, and could not be permitted to contravene, in theory or practice, the positive injunctions of the York charter.

I profess neither to justify nor to defend all that is contained in the oaths of the lodges, if all that has been recently asserted of their tenor and contents be true; and if it can be proved that the power to inflict the penalties invoked by them exists in any individual, or in any body of men whatever, they, and the order by whom they are adopted, would deserve the severest reprobation. I deny, however, that such is the case. These oaths, as I have shown, were instituted in the middle ages, when society was in a more barbarous state, and remain, like many of the formula of civil law, mere empty ceremonials. Had free masonry taken its rise at the present day, or even in 1717, such oaths would have been without the shadow of an apology, and, in fact, would never have been enjoined. It needs no oath, and no invocation of corporal penalty, at the present day, to bind the faith of a right minded man. If there be nothing unlawful or immoral in the nature and tendency of any association to which he may belong, his word is a sufficient guarantee for his maintaining its secrets inviolable. Should he break that word, he has sufficient punishment in the conscious shame and public ignominy which attend violated faith to one's party, friend, or country. On the dread of such disgrace, the most poignant that a noble mind can suffer, it would have been more dignified and judicious for the lodges to rely, to secure the fidelity of their members.

Such, I repeat, would have been the case, had masonry been instituted at the present day, and those oaths which have excited the horror and dismay of many minds, who supposed them fraught with the real evils they invoke, are mere empty forms, phantoms of the past, held up, perhaps, in terrorum, but conferring no real power upon others to inflict their penalties any other way than by expelling the delinquent, and holding him up as one capable of violating a promise enforced by so many obligations.

In this view of the subject, though they may appear absurd and ridiculous in the eyes of intelligent men, and so they certainly are, at the present day, they will scarcely be found to merit severe censure.

Universal experience will show that they admit of no other interpretation. In all periods in which free masonry has existed, from the origin of the earliest Societies of Architects, to the present day, there have been numerous instances of unfaithful members, by whom the secrets have been divulged, and the whole order reviled and slandered. These, too, have occurred in the rudest ages, at periods when laws were impotent, when the most sanguinary acts of revenge could be committed with impunity, and when fanaticism would glory in avenging the violated faith of its order. Yet never in these times, nor at any subsequent day, has there been any instance of violence attempted against the person of a mason, in punishment of a breach of faith, until the recent and ever to be lamented occurrence on our Northern Frontier. It may be observed also, that any such act would be a violation of the charter, which enjoins the members to obey the laws of morality, to be peaceable citizens or subjects, and never to allow themselves to be engaged in plots or conspiracies against the public peace. If, therefore, there be anything in the constitutional authorised objects of free masonry, to constitute it a moral and political evil, it cannot be denominated one, unless its progress and effects, it has so far departed from its original ends as to deserve that stigma. I certainly do not mean to assert that the provisions of the York Constitution have been uniformly adhered to:

such can hardly be predicated of any institution whatever—or that its objects have been steadily attained: on the contrary I freely confess that it has often been abused and perverted, but I am not disposed on this account to assert or believe that in its practical effects, in this country at least, it has been a moral and political evil. If such had been the case, the instances, which in the course of time must have risen up to demonstrate it, might readily be referred to; and surely among all the eminent men of all parties, classes and denominations, secular and clerical, who have belonged to the order, some of sufficient virtue and firmness would have been found long since, to have proclaimed it, both in their writings and by their example. It does not comport with the object of this letter to enter into an examination of the instances in which the authority of the Lodges may have been exerted to improve and regulate the moral conduct of their members; or to enumerate the cases, in which they have dispensed their charity, for the relief of the unfortunate. Such may be found in the records of the society, and it may be hoped will be remembered in the prayers of the objects of its beneficence; but if there be a case in which any deserving object has supplicated the charity of the order in vain, it has not yet been mentioned in the catalogue of its offences. As it regards the connection of the order, with the politics of the country, it would be in direct contravention of the charter, and although it is possible, nay probable, that in some instances there may have been ground to suspect it, and yet more probable that personal friendships formed and ripened in the lodges, may have regulated the preference for individual members, in the support of the candidates for public offices, yet if there be one single case in which the lodges or craft, as a body, have, in any way, interfered in politics, and elections, I am unacquainted with it. So, if there be any instance in the history of the country, from the landing of the Pilgrims until the present hour, in which a free mason, duly informed of the principles of his order, has in the hour of trial or of danger, in any emergency invoking his humanity or patriotism, shrunk from the performance of his duty from any mistaken sense of his secret obligations, it has not yet been discovered. While considering the supposed and apprehended connection of free masonry, with politics, it would only be doing justice to advert to the position of the order, under all the excitement produced by the fatal occurrence on the Northern Frontier. A cry of indignation has gone throughout the union against the whole society; its members have been objects of suspicion and reproach; they have been threatened with disfranchisement as citizens, and exclusion from any share in the honors and trusts of a common country. Yet in such a crisis, which if any thing could, would inspire them with a determination to unite in their own defence, and elevate a man of their own order, there has not been the slightest manifestation of any combination in, or out of the lodges, to exert their power for any political purpose. I speak not with censure of this excitement, so far as it is sincerely felt, and directed to honest ends. No one more sincerely deplores the fate of the unhappy victim, whose tragical end has provoked so much indignation, and I need scarcely add, that none can feel a deeper abhorrence of the perpetrators of that atrocious crime. Whether deservedly or not, it can scarcely fail to inflict a lasting reproach upon the order of which they have been supposed to be members, and will doubtless accelerate the final doom, to which, like its prototypes, the societies of the architects, free masonry is inevitably destined. But I cannot admit that even such an outrage, by a few deluded and wicked

men, whom neither feelings of humanity, nor the obligations of christianity could restrain, ought to involve a whole society in the guilt of moral and political crime. To condemn classes for the unauthorised acts of degenerate and incorrigible individuals, would erect a standard of judgment inconsistent with the age in which we live, and with the social and moral order of the world. It would be worse than the doctrine of attainder with all its horrors. It would bring a daily reproach not only upon states and families, but upon the most sacred of all institutions. To me it appears wiser and more just, to second the great body of free masons, in all parts of the country, in deep reprobation of the crime, and holding it up as a salutary admonition to all future ages. These considerations naturally lead me to consider the second question you have proposed, to which from the observations already made, if they be entitled to any respect, I can only be expected to give a negative answer.

2nd Question—There being no express provision in the constitution either of the state or federal governments, applying directly to the subject, the question, whether it be “a fair constitutional, and expedient exercise of the elective franchise, may be supposed to imply an inquiry into the spirit, rather than the positive terms, of these fundamental charters; and to concede, as in truth it ought to do, that if it be contrary to the spirit of those instruments, it would not be fair.”

If the views I have endeavored to present of the real objects and character of free masonry be correct, the answer to this question, might be confined to the fact that there being in the institution, no moral and political evil, it could not, upon any just principle, be the object of the elective franchise. The inquiry, however, has more extensive and important bearings, and, though free masonry should be deemed less unobjectionable than I have supposed, would nevertheless desire a negative answer, & should therefore receive more particular notice. If this question be allowed the scope which its terms, no less than its rational interpretation, in connection with that which follows, admit of, it becomes in my view, both in its nature and consequences, the most important of the series. On the supposition that the portion of the American population, to which it refers, is dangerous to the state, it involves the propriety of employing the whole power of the elective franchise, if that be necessary, to disfranchise the individuals of that portion as citizens, and thereby to eradicate the evil! It has been, and I fervently trust will long continue to be, our pride and boast, that we live under a constitutional Government of laws, giving to all the citizens equal rights, of which they cannot be deprived but by the laws of the land, and the judgment of their peers. In our representative system, the elective franchise, being the means whereby the people select the agents by whom the government is to be administered, becomes the great power of the State, a power on which the government itself and all its attributes repose. It is in this view, no less than in its original structure, that the government derives its just powers from the consent of the people. It is by these means that the fundamental principles of the government are properly guarded, enforced, and carried into effect, and the ultimate and only constitutional accountability of the Representative to the people is secured. It becomes therefore a power of tremendous import and effect, for good or for ill.” On the purity and wisdom of its exercise we must depend for all the security, prosperity and happiness, to be expected from our free system; and it cannot be too deeply impressed upon the minds of the American people,

that with the sapping of this great bulwark of their sovereignty, will date the decline, and eventual downfall, of one of the noblest structures with which any people on the earth have been blessed.

The elective franchise is necessarily liable, too liable, to be perverted and misused, by the ignorant and designing, and requires therefore a proportionable degree of vigilance, to preserve its purity. It has been secured by the constitution to the people as their shield; it ought never to be wielded by them as a weapon of destruction. It is intended to bring wisdom and virtue and patriotism into the administration of our affairs, to introduce therefore by its means, qualities of a different character, would be a perversion of its purpose. The exercise of the elective franchise ought always to be guided by patriotic intention, and wise discrimination, to elevate the meritorious and to rebuke the demagogue; to promote the common good, not the selfish interests of faction. Above all it should never be employed to gratify vindictive purposes, but should consult the harmony and concord of the whole. So important do I consider the purity of the elective franchise, that I have never been able to preserve my respect for any public man, who proved himself capable of wresting it from its legitimate purposes, either to subserve his own ends, or to accomplish those of his party. I do not mean to state the question too strong, when I state that it proposes by means of this great power to raise up a party for the distinct and avowed object of disfranchising, in the broadest sense of the term, all the citizens of the United States who happen to be free masons, and to exclude them from the trusts and privileges of a common country. It is possible that many of those who have not examined the subject with the attention it merits, may suppose their object to be confined to a mere inquiry into the propriety of voting for or against any man belonging to a masonic lodge, who may be presented as a candidate for public office. The purpose however does not admit even of this limitation, for besides that if the evil be really so great, as has been by some supposed, such would be a partial and inadequate remedy, the second and third questions considered together, expressly give it a further object, and a wider scope. They propose to confer the appointing power upon those only who will consent to accept it upon the condition to exclude all free masons from office. In this way, both the elective franchise of the people, and the executive power of the government, are to be immediately exerted to proscribe and disfranchise all those who may be free masons. None who are acquainted with the passions and excesses incident to parties struggling for power, can expect that the objects of such a party, or the proscription at which it aims, would be long confined to the executive or appointing power. It cannot even be hoped, that a party so originating, would be satisfied with a partial exercise of its sway, or with the ordinary enjoyments of victory; or that it would practice any great magnanimity toward the vanquished. It is to be feared that giving way to the same excesses which have marked the history of personal parties in all periods of the world, it would stain its laurels with intolerance, nor pause in its career, until it had exerted the power of all the departments of the government to exterminate its enemy. Differing from all the parties that have arisen in the United States, and contemplating in its inception the proscription of its opponents, it cannot be distinguished from the sectarian struggles and dissensions which have destroyed the peace, if they have not overthrown the liberties of every country in which they have prevailed.

This question, therefore, involves, neither more nor less than an inquiry into the Constitutionality, and expediency of exerting the whole power of a state, to disfranchise a portion of its citizens, as a punishment for the exercise of the rights of opinion and liberty of conscience in matters wholly disconnected with politics! If my opinions of free masonry were different from what they are, and more analogous to those you are pleased to entertain, I should tremble to give this question an affirmative answer, and I devoutly trust that for the happiness of a common country and the permanence of our free institutions, the respectable body whom you represent, when they come to look dispassionately at the subject, will deliberate long before they give it their sanction. I hope they will consider it, with a single eye to the great interest and glorious destiny of a free country, and neither be deluded by their own indignation, however virtuous, at a supposed evil, nor misled by the unholy aspiration of ambitious politicians who may be willing to take advantage of the prejudices and passions of honest men, to promote their own unworthy purposes. I pray you, gentlemen, well to consider, supposing free masonry to be objectionable, in its secrets, and even in its results, whether there be any such imminent danger and atrocious evil in the order, or in its past conduct and consequences, to authorise the exertion of the tremendous power now invoked for the oppression of its members? In any just and impartial view of this proposition, it must not be forgotten that free masonry has existed from the earliest period of our country, and that as a body its objects are moral and charitable; that it embraces within its order, a large portion of the best and most cultivated minds of all classes, sects and occupations, among which are men of acknowledged morality and patriotism, who up to the present time have filled some of the most distinguished offices in the state, with credit to themselves and advantage to the nation; that they have a deep, equal interest in the country and its institutions; that they bear their full share of the burthens of the state, are liable to participate in its trials and difficulties, and entitled to share in its glories and triumphs; that they may be called to fight its battles, and have been called, and have fought them nobly, from the Father of his Country, to the present Chief Magistrate of the Union—so that their characters and their services form an inherent and glorious part of our National History. I therefore pray you seriously to consider whether it can be according to the spirit of the Constitution, or in any sense expedient, to raise up a party for the avowed purpose of bringing the whole moral and political power of the State to disfranchise such an order of men. It appears to me proper also to reflect, whether such a scheme be not in any view impracticable. We are bound to consider what would be the effect of such a party combination upon our social relations, and the good order of the community: whether, instead of removing Free-Masonry as a political evil, Anti-Masonry itself would not become political Anti-Masonry. What sort of spirit would not be engendered by such conflicting parties—the one aiming at the oppression of a large and intelligent class—the other struggling to defend and preserve its liberties and reputation. To me it seems clear that the dissensions which would attend such a state of parties, would find few parallels in the past; and how long the noble fabrics of the American Constitutions, and that proudest of all, the American Union, could endure such a state of intestine feud, no man among us is wise enough to predict. Speaking for myself, and under the fullest sense of responsibility, I

frankly pronounce the employment of such means, for such purposes, inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution. That spirit is to be traced from the earliest period of our colonial history. It peopled the country we inhabit with a race of men, who could brook neither intolerance nor oppression in any form; and who, braving the perils of the deep, and the hardships of a savage land, sought freedom of opinion, and liberty of conscience, in the depths of the wilderness.

The same spirit broke forth with increased energy in the Declaration of Independence, and accomplished its triumph in the establishment of a free government. All the State Constitutions embody the same spirit; and in terms more or less explicit, declare that all the citizens are equal in rights. The Constitution of Pennsylvania explicitly declares, "that no human authority can, in any case whatever, interfere with the rights of conscience." That any interference short of the conventional power of the people, with the rights and liberties thus secured, would be an infraction of their spirit, if not of the positive provisions of our political Charters, will scarcely be denied: and if the exposition I have given of Free-Masonry be correct, the immunities of its members cannot be less sacred. The conformity of such an exercise of the elective franchise, and of the executive power, with the spirit of our Constitutions, might be subjected to the test of a proposition in the Legislature of a State or of the Union, to declare that no member of an Abolition or Anti-Abolition Society, or of the Society of Free-Masons, should vote or be voted for at elections—should serve on Juries, or give testimony in Courts of Justice, or hold any office of trust or emolument under the authority of the Union or of a State! I hope it may be long before any legislator will be found ready to make such a proposition; and I cannot doubt, if any such should be made, it would be not less repugnant to the universal sense of mankind, than to the Constitution of the land. If Free-Masonry be of such a character, as, that without an infraction of the Constitutions, it would be incompetent to disfranchise its members by the whole legislative power of the State, it would appear to be only a rational conclusion, that that which cannot be legally effected by the whole, cannot be accomplished by any single department; or even by the elective franchise of the people. I do not here pretend to maintain that a citizen may not exercise his elective franchise, according to his discretion, or even caprice. I am nevertheless free to declare, that if the exercise of that important power be guided by other considerations than the welfare and prosperity of the States and the proper fitness and qualifications of the candidate, or be employed to deprive any portion of the People of their constitutional rights, such an exercise would be an abuse, for which the elector, would have a severe account to settle with his own conscience. The grave question I am considering is, whether it be consistent with the spirit of the Constitution to form parties, and enter into combinations, in order to employ the elective franchise, or the power and patronage of any one department, to interfere with the rights and privileges of the citizen, in a way, and to a degree, which all the departments together could not constitutionally do. My remarks do not apply to the order of Free-Masons only; they equally apply to combinations for the exclusion of any class, not obnoxious to the laws, whether lodges of free-masons, or societies of mechanics, or professional men: for this purpose I regard the spirit and objects of the Constitution as imperative as their positive provisions. I freely admit that the general objects of a limited government would authorize no other power for their attain-

ment, than that specially, or by fair implication, delegated; but I hold it to be clear, that the delegated powers should be exercised in the manner most likely to attain the objects for which the government was established.

What those objects are, under our system, and by what means the administration of the government should promote them, I do not here propose particularly to enquire; but surely no one will deny, that if our governments should be so administered, as neither to establish justice, nor promote tranquility, secure the blessings of civil liberty, nor maintain the equal rights of the citizen, but should denounce and proscribe any particular class, for the freedom of opinion and the exercise of conscience, it would act in a direct outrage of the sacred objects which they were established to secure. To me it is equally clear, that, for a government to encourage and ferment party Feuds, in order to acquire power, or to maintain measures which the unbiassed reason of the people would reject, would also be subversive of the spirit of the constitution. But what I would particularly urge upon your reflection is, that the same duty which is imposed upon those who administer the government faithfully, to promote and adhere to the spirit and objects of the the constitution is, in no less degree, imposed upon the people themselves; and that a settled course of conduct, which would be contrary to the constitution, if pursued by any or all of the departments of the government, would not be less so, if adopted by the people in their party combinations. I am aware of the hazard which any one incurs, who at the present day, attempts any limitation whatever, of what is called the Sovereignty of the People, yet aiming only at truth, and meaning to contend for no limitation which the people have not consented to, I must encounter the hazard. I will not merely profess, I know and feel that I am an advocate of popular rights and of a free and popular government. But it is of a Constitutional Government, of which I am the advocate, and so constituted as to be obligatory in all its parts, upon all who live under it, defining their rights and obligations, and imposing its injunctions upon all, whether in or out of the administration. Ours are constitutions of limited and of limiting powers; in submitting ourselves to their control, we surrender up some of our natural rights, in order to ensure the protection of others, and such as the frame of government secures, must be exercised according to its limits and regulations. Ours is a Government of the people, and for the people; it is a government of the people in no other sense, than that it emanates from them, is made for their common benefit, derives its just powers from their consent, and is liable to be changed by them, whenever they may so ordain; but until so changed, any outrage committed by them upon the rights of the citizen, would be no less a violation of the constitution and laws, than if committed by the government, and I do not hesitate to avow that any interference with the rights I have been considering, by the government or the people, would be equally liable to the objections already stated. The inexpediency of organizing such a party, for such purposes, if it had not entered into the foregoing observations, would, if those observations be entitled to respect, require little further remark, since that which would be subversive of the spirit of the constitution could not be expedient. In my opinion, however it would be less expedient than constitutional, and even if it were constitutional, still it would be inexpedient, nor can I change this opinion, until persuaded that divisions and animosities, and factions and dissensions, are the elements of hap-

piness in a free government; and that party and political proscription is a just punishment for the innocent enjoyment of our civil and social rights. Surely, Gentlemen, this nation has been already too severely scourged by the demon of party, not to make us dread a continuance or increase of its desolating sway. What ravages has it committed upon public and private character? What ostracism has it exercised upon the soundest intellect and loftiest patriotism, and driven their possessors into the shade! Its inexorable spirit and corrupting influence in the past are matters of history; how much more corrupting and fatal it may be in the future, is a subject of deep and unfeigned apprehension. That it sanctions the usurpation of powers not conferred, and denies those which may be indispensable to the proper management of public affairs, and that it may disturb the just balance of the constitution and accumulate undue power, in a single department, all will admit: That it has occasionally threatened all the Institutions of government and subversed at least the moral efficacy of some, is beyond a doubt; and that it would be capable of immolating the whole, if they intercepted its schemes, no one who has been an observer of history will controvert.

That it would be capable if any should be found wicked enough, so to use it, of attacking the frame of the Constitution itself, of rendering its Institutions unpopular with the majority, of creating the alternative of surrendering independence to preserve existence, and of bringing into party odium, all who value their principles more than their place, is proved by the experience of most free governments. That it can dive into the recesses of private life, violate the sanctity of the domestic circle, direct the engines of calumny against the fairest and purest characters, brand those who were never suspected with unmerited obloquy, and transmit their names to their children stamped with the venom of a licentious press; that in pursuing its purposes it can transform virtue into vice, and patriotism into treason, while on the other hand it can vamp up the demagogue into a statesman, and so dress up its idols, that they may well be surprised at their own metamorphosis, are matters too notorious to be denied, and too grievous not to be deplored. That in its nature it is tyrannical and oppressive, tolerating no opposition, and visiting the exercise of independent judgment, however honest, with the severest penalties; that it is indiscriminate and prodigal in its favors, and vindictive and merciless in its resentments, that in the accomplishment of its ends, it hesitates not at the violation of private faith and personal honor, the betrayal of public trust and individual friendship, are truths demonstrated by the whole history of its career. But why, gentlemen, should I attempt to portray, what may be, and is constantly done by the despotic spirit of proscriptive party? Might I not rather enquire what it is not capable of doing, or what it has not done? But surely, that which is capable of producing so much mischief, as to become in itself both a moral and political evil, cannot receive any encouragement, from so respectable a body as the Anti-masons of Pennsylvania. They will not assist in conjuring up a new demon, to ruin all that the old monster has failed to corrupt and destroy! If indeed freemasonry be a public evil, the removal of it from the United States, demands no such remedy, and will require no such sacrifice; its existence on the contrary might be thereby prolonged. There is too much good sense in the order, unnecessarily to resist public opinion and to provoke opposition; they will be more likely quietly to resign the Institution to the same fate which has awaited all of a similar nature; and they will

only be prevented from doing so, by a spirit of intolerance and persecution, which will leave them no alternative between resistance and dishonor. Instead therefore of resorting to means, whereby the evils of party and of the factious dissensions which have resulted from it, would be greatly aggravated; those whom their virtues have raised to distinction in the community, ought rather to exert the influence of their station and character to lessen its evils.

The ignorant and designing may be expected to indulge in the vindictive passions of party contests; but to those who have been favored with greater means of intelligence and with a juster appreciation of the advantages of a free government, and of good order in Society, we look for different conduct. Of these it is the solemn duty to act with such wisdom and moderation, as that their example may be a shining and perpetual light to all others.

These observations lead me to the particular consideration of the third question, by which it is enquired whether I believe it to be the duty of a Chief Magistrate of a State or of the Union, elected on Anti-masonic principles, to sustain those principles in his appointments to office? The principles of Anti-Masonry here referred to, constitute it, the distinct and common purpose of an organized party to exercise the elective franchise, and the executive patronage, for the exclusion from office, of all men who belong to the Society of Free-Masonry. Although their general capacity and fitness may be unquestionable, their creed with respect to the Constitution orthodox, and their opinions upon general questions of public policy, not only sound, but even identical with those of anti-masons, I would feel great delicacy in expressing my opinion of the duty of a Chief Magistrate, who could entertain so low an estimate of his high and sacred station, as to have allowed himself to be elevated to it on such principles. Having reached that station by such means, however, and the excitement of the struggle being over, it would be too late, perhaps, to survey the nature of the ground on which he stood, and the fearful responsibility he had assumed in clambering to it. When he found himself upon the brink of the precipice—when he beheld the civil and political wrongs he was pledged to perpetrate—when he looked forward to the doom of proscription and disfranchisement that must ensue, upon a large portion of his countrymen—I will not maintain that he should betray the expectations he had authorized, break the promise he had made, and retreat from the precipice to which it had advanced him; but I will say, that I should not envy him his perilous elevation.

Throwing my observations upon this question, however, into a different form, I hope I may be permitted to say, that no man who values the spirit and stability of the American Institutions, and desires the happiness of the people, ought ever to place himself in such a situation—or consent to reach the most eminent political trust by such means. Thinking of the American people as I do—sincerely desiring their happiness and prosperity, and the permanence of our Free Institutions—esteeming highly and unfeignedly the spontaneous favor of the people, as the noblest reward of noble actions—and regarding the high office of Chief Magistrate, when conferred as a public trust for the public benefit, as the highest mark of their approbation and confidence—I must consider that man, who would consent to pursue it by means, or to accept it upon conditions, destructive of the tranquillity of the public, and subversive of the stability of the government, as not only unfit for the station, but unworthy of the confidence of his

countrymen. I do not say that he who consents to be held up as the chosen leader or head of a party formed on national grounds, as a proper agent to administer the government, according to their principles of policy, for the common benefit, would be acting unworthy of himself or his station, far from it. Party divisions springing from honest differences of opinion in regard to the Constitution and questions of public policy, are inherent, if not salutary in our free system, and in selecting the head of the Government, with capacity to administer it; it would be impossible to separate the man from the measures to be pursued. In all such associations, there must be preferences, connections and friendships, which, I hope, I would be the last to discourage or to betray.

But what I do say is, that he who could consent to become, not the head to control, but the instrument to execute, all the purposes of party, and of party formed not for national, but for personal objects, who could stoop to wind his way through the crooked paths of intrigue and adulation; minister to the worst passions of the multitude, rather than endeavor to give them a proper direction; who could form and betray friendships with equal indifference, and abandon old and join new associations with like facility; who would court the opinions of others by an apparent or unscrupulous abandonment of his own, and come ultimately to administer the government of a people divided and distracted, such a man, in my opinion, would be wholly unfit for the place. And what I moreover feel it my duty to say is, that any man, be he whom he may, who could consent to take office with an understanding, and upon the condition of disfranchising a large minority of his countrymen, does by that very act not only prove himself unworthy of, but disqualifies himself for the very duties which he must swear to perform. I not only could not excuse his giving of pledges, which in their redemption would deprive any number of his fellow citizens of their inalienable rights, and shake the institutions of his country to their foundation; but I hold it to be the duty of any man aspiring to that high office, to leave his own incorruptible patriotism and lofty independence, free from all doubt, and stoop to no equivocation, or other unworthy means to acquire suffrages, but that while he would be willing to receive and be flattered by the support of any number of his fellow citizens, it should be bestowed and accepted with a clear understanding that he should go to minister at the altar of his country with pure hands and a heart imbued with the spirit of liberty and of the constitution; and disdaining all pledges not imposed by the oath, it would become his duty to take, that he should consider himself the head of the nation and not of a party, called to administer the government for the benefit of the whole people, and not for a particular part. To heal, not to foment divisions; to allay, not to excite bitter passions and animosities; in a word, "instead of abetting the divisions of the people, to endeavor to unite them, and to become himself the centre of their union."

Pledges of any kind from public men looking for public favor are at all times to be distrusted, and, in my opinion, are anti-republican. A man properly ambitious of public trust, will make it his study to qualify himself for its duties; he will desire it not as a personal boon or reward, but as the means of rendering service to his country; and while he would be incapable of using it for wicked or sinister purposes, so he will disdain to employ any petty arts to obtain it; he will freely and fearlessly unroll the volume of his past life, to the broadest gaze of his countrymen; and inviting and abiding the severest investigation and

scrutiny into the whole, will be content to be judged from thence; as to what his conduct would be in any further trust, he might be called upon to discharge in any exigency, in which his country might be placed. To perform faithfully and efficiently the obligations of such trust, he would desire the whole scope of power and means conferred upon it by the constitution, and he would consider it unworthy of him, to give any further pledge than the legitimate one implied in the oath of office, by which he engages to act honestly according to the best of his judgment, for the happiness of the whole country. All indefinite pledges and promises exacted from a candidate for a high employ without reference to future exigences, can seldom fail to be detrimental to the public service; they restrict and narrow down the duties of office, they cramp the energies and shackle the understanding of the occupant, they, in a manner, absolve him from all responsibility to his own conscience and his innate sense of honor, until losing the character of a free man; he comes to consider himself an instrument of the purposes of others, and sinks from the elevated fidelity of a public functionary, to the subserviency of a party tool. No man, in fact, really qualified for lofty employ, would accept it on such terms, however he might pant for an honorable place in the service of his country, and honorable distinction in the eyes of his countrymen; he would deem the private station the real post of honor, rather than the highest office to be obtained by an unworthy surrender of his independence. No gentlemen! promises and pledges, given in advance, are not from the mint and coinage of the really meritorious. They are the base currency of eager and grasping ambition, promptly and profusely given, where the golden qualities that would at once inspire confidence are wanting. In the course of my experience I have observed, that men most ready to give promises and pledges, or to expect them from others, are the most prone to elude or violate them precisely on the emergencies for which they were provided, namely, whenever the interest of the people and the interest of the agent conflict. The giving of pledges is itself a proof that the applicant for office looks to its possession as much, if not more to himself, than for the good of those who bestow it. And as the high moral tone of his character is weakened by the very act of parting with his independence and self respect to obtain it, the public can have no security that when the blandishments of power and the temptation of official countenance and patronage are brought to operate upon him, he will not stoop to a further act of abasement, and falsify his promises to acquire more power. I have here spoken of those promises and pledges in the general which are so frequently resorted to by the incompetent aspirers to popular favor; but those promises and pledges express or implied which involve the obligation to minister to the vindictive, or persecuting schemes of party, and to denounce and proscribe whoever may fall under its ban, can never be given without a most dangerous infraction of the Constitution and an inexcusable disregard of the happiness of the people. No doubt occasions may arise under our government, as they have arisen in all others, which from the state of the country and the condition of public affairs, may make it unavoidable that a chief magistrate should sometimes favor one party and discourage another, and this he may do without making it the settled and uniform policy of his administration. But a chief Magistrate of a state, or of the United States, who is properly impressed with the character and duties of his elevated station, will neither attempt to govern by the force of one party, nor to use his office to oppress and proscribe the members of another.

The great duties of a Chief Magistrate of a State or of the Union, consist in maintaining the Constitution, and in pursuing the true interests of the people, and he who is most careful to form and maintain a wise and good administration to subdue faction and promote the union of the people, and who endeavor to *make their greatest good* the proper object of the government," will be most likely to perform those duties. We have seen that from the very nature and structure of our system, party divisions are neither to be avoided nor, if kept within proper limits, to be deprecated.

It is when from their excesses they lose their national characteristics and degenerate into factions, that they become dangerous.

These excesses a patriotic Chief Magistrate will feel it his duty to prevent, and by his own independent conduct discountenance.

Raised by his own merits and the voice of the people above the angry elements of party, he should make it his chief business to calm their violence. The feuds and hostility engendered in a struggle for political power, remain long after the causes which produced them have ceased; nor is it surprising that those who may have been immediately engaged in the conflict, should mix up their personal feelings with matters of a national concern. But in these a Chief Magistrate can take no part without a violation of his duty. His business is to unite and not divide the people, and instead of treating the defeated party as a vanquished enemy to be held in perpetual subjection, and the trusts of the government as spoils, to be distributed to the conquerors, it would become his duty to look upon those contests as honest differences of opinion between citizens of a common country, equally intent upon its honor and prosperity, though varying as to the means of their attainment. The two great precepts of the Athenian Philosopher, for all who aspire to be at the head of a government, are 1st, "To make the safety and interest of the citizens the great aim and design of all their thoughts and endeavors without considering their own personal advantage." Secondly, "so to take care of the whole collective body of the republic, as not to serve the interest of any one party to the prejudice or neglect of all the rest." To these he adds, "That a truly brave citizen, who deserves to hold the reins of the government, will so give himself to the service of the republic, as to aim at no power for himself; and will so take care of the whole community as not to pass over any one part of it."

Such a one will scorn by mean acts of calumny and a false accusation to bring others into hatred and disrepute with the people; but will always adhere to what is just and honest, and never be drawn from it." Also Tully in his offices, in adverting to the political division between P. Africanus and Q. Metellus, which was conducted without bitterness and animosity, discourages the notion entertained by some of his countrymen, that it was the part of a brave and heroic spirit, to show heat of anger and passion against an adversary. And he regards it as certain that nothing is more laudable, nothing more worthy of a great and brave person than clemency, meekness, and gentleness of spirit." If these principles of the Athenian Philosopher and of the Roman orator had made a due impression on the minds of their countrymen we might have read their salutary effect in the prosperity of Greece and Rome, instead of having to draw a more melancholy lesson from the final overthrow of those powerful empires. Theirs has been the history of all free governments which have preceded our own, and though our people may become as enlightened, as the most sanguine among us

can expect, theirs may likewise be our history, unless we select for our public agents and our Chief Magistrates especially, such as will have the firmness to discourage proscription, moderate the spirit of party, and participate in none of its excesses. If it shall ever happen that a Chief Magistrate shall be found in this country, having made his way to that high office by ministering to the irregular and sordid passions of the multitude, or to the vindictive feelings of personal parties, and possesses not the disposition and ability subsequently to regulate and control them: who shall consent to govern by the power of a fiction and not by the constitution; who regardless of the only solid foundation of all true renown, and to ensure the consummation of party schemes, shall exert the power and influence of his station to inflame the public mind, and foment and encourage divisions among the people; who shall deem all men enemies and just objects of his denunciation, who may honestly and decently differ with him upon points of his administration: who shall cheapen public trusts, by conferring office upon the unworthy, who shall dispense his patronage to reward his partizans and punish those who honestly exercise their own opinion. Whenever such a one shall appear, the knell of the republic will be sounded, and if his course should be sustained by the people, its doom will be irrevocably sealed. My belief is, therefore, that the Chief Magistrate of a State or of the Union, ought not by his appointments to office to sustain any principle of any kind, which makes it his duty to proscribe any portion of his fellow citizens for a lawful difference of opinion merely, and more especially for opinion in no wise connected with their duty to the constitution and the politics of the state. Having by the result of our revolution and the establishment of our constitution, secured the blessings of liberty, if we have not acquired the liberty of thinking freely, upon all subjects connected with our happiness, and acting upon the opinions thus formed with decency toward others, without being exposed to proscription and disfranchisement, we have acquired nothing, and are to this day slaves. But this liberty, I hold, we have secured, and that no Chief Magistrate ought to interfere with it; and were he capable of doing so, he would be in my opinion "unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

A Chief Magistrate of a state, and especially of the Union, should look to far nobler objects, and consider himself called to a much higher destiny. I would have him rouse his spirit and expand his mind to the elevation and grandeur of his important trust. WASHINGTON was the head of the nation, not of a party; and amid all the trials of his situation, complex as it certainly was, and amid the labors of organizing and conducting a new Government, arduous as they were; beset also with the most dangerous of all jealousies he made and preserved a united people, and finally retired from their service with greater character and more durable renown than he carried into it. During the administration of General Washington, most of the great questions which have subsequently agitated the country and divided the people into parties, took their rise, and were freely and ardently discussed. During his administration, all the jealousy on the part of the State Governments of the authority of the General Government, existed in its full vigor, (for then the limitation between the two was less defined than now) and gave rise to the distinction of *federal* and *anti-federal* in our political division. During the same administration, many of the most important questions regarding the positive and real powers of the several departments took their origin, and were variously treated, and many points in the agricultural, and manufacturing and commercial policy of the

Government were also agitated, the general financial scheme of the Government, involving the great question of the Bank, was a prominent and exciting subject of discussion, and all the delicate and complex questions and collisions arising out of our foreign relations, led to the freest discussions and broadest divisions. Among the latter the Proclamation of Neutrality produced as much agitation in this country as has prevailed at any subsequent period. The agitation spread through all parts of the nation, and clubs and societies were in many places formed to denounce the foreign policy of the Government, and to menace its executive; nay, though that executive was the Father of his country. To such extremes was the spirit of party carried, that he was not only opposed in his cabinet, but openly reviled and misrepresented in the country, and in some places burnt in effigy. If in that early crisis of our history, that great man had given way to his personal feelings, and been disposed to maintain his power at the risk of the public tranquillity—had he been content to enlist a party with him, or to enlist himself with any party, had he preferred to rule by a faction, and to have appealed to the feelings with which his brilliant military career had inspired the great mass of his countrymen, and to have rewarded his supporters, and proscribed his opponents, in that eventful period of his life, no doubt he would have been sustained by a large majority of the people; but he would have inflicted the greatest of all curses upon his country and never have acquired the rich renown with which his memory will be crowned throughout all future time. Far different was his course; looking to the occasional agitations of party as inseparable from the enjoyment of liberty, the stability of the Government, and the union and concord of the people as the great objects of his care, he never once, throughout the whole of this perilous period, indulged in undignified passions or unworthy resentment; but maintaining a noble severity he looked down with calmness but circumspection on the tumultuous agitation of the people, and watched the occasion to calm their discontents, and appeal to their reason and patriotism; proving by this exalted moderation, the real strength and grandeur of his soul, and more firmly establishing his position as the real head of the nation. His appointments to office were made with a single view of capacity and fidelity to the Constitution, and their fitness has been universally acknowledged. He was neither afraid nor unwilling to call to public trust, and to stations in his immediate council some of the most active, intelligent and powerful of the opponents of his measures and policy. It is the proud and exalted merit of his civil career, and which makes it an epoch in our history that he conducted himself so clear in his great office, as on no occasion to sacrifice his duty to the public to his own purposes; and that not a single instance of party appointment and proscription stained the purity or marred the beauty and harmony of his administration. This country has produced no second Washington; and it may be feared it will be long before it will. Nevertheless, it ought to be the fervent prayer of every true patriot, that that event may yet happen, and that its advent may be hastened, and that until it shall please Providence to raise up such another, we may constantly meditate upon his pure example, and that some one may yet be found who has sufficiently studied the model of that matchless patriot, as to be able to preside over a united people.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

LOUIS MLANE.

To J. WALLACE, SAMUEL SNOCH, GEO. W. HARRIS, Esqs. Committee, &c.



